

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Nemont fiber optic line to existing compressor station	Proposed Implementation Date: 2023
Proponent: Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. PO Box 600, Scobey, MT 59263	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to install an underground fiber optic line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust lands in Valley County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most). The line will allow for improved telecommunication capabilities in this rural area and surrounding communities.	
Location: N1/2, N1/2, of Sec. 36, Twp. 34N, Rge. 39E	County: Valley

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Jodi Benson, Right-of-Way Agent for Nemont, informed staff at the Glasgow Unit Office (GUO) of plans for this project, and shortly thereafter submitted the Right-of-Way applications. GUO staff reviewed and processed the application.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project. No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: Grant permission to Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line on School Trust lands.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny permission to Nemont Telephone Cooperative, Inc. to install the fiber optic line on School Trust lands.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	

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RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of a variety of soil types that are common in the general area, none of which are fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There would be temporary soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. This disturbance is relatively shallow and does not remove/displace any soil. Slight soil compaction would occur due to temporarily increased vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no changes to soils.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there would be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic would result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants would be produced.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land would have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to</p>

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	<p>vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to air quality.</p>
<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>The acreage within the area of impact consists of grazing land managed for typical use. No rare plants or cover types are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The fiber optic line would have no impact on the vegetative community due to the knifing process used to install the line.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the plant communities.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>The School Trust land provides habitat for upland birds, antelope and deer. There is good potential for recreation on these tracts, due to ease of access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be small and would be mitigated quickly with the return to normal management practices.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the possible use as wildlife habitat.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?</p>	<p>The area of impact does not consist of any sensitive or specially identified habitat. No wetlands are within the area of impact. The species of concern within the area of impact: Long Billed Curlew, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, and Chesnutt Collared Longspur.</p>

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Action Alternative: Any impacts due to installation of the line would be small and would be mitigated quickly with the return to normal agricultural management practices.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to the environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search results revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the APE, but it should be noted that Class III level inventory work has not been conducted there to date.

Because the topographic setting and geology suggest a low to moderate likelihood of the presence of cultural or palaeontologic resources, proposed timber harvest activities are expected to have *No Effect to Antiquities*. No additional archaeological investigative work would be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

Action Alternative: The proposed project would have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

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	<p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>The proposed project is directly adjacent to a county road and would be readily visible to the public during installation. Following a short period of regrowth after installation, there would be little to no visible evidence of the line.</p> <p>Action Alternative: An underground line in this area would not alter the aesthetics at all after installation activities have ceased.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to aesthetics..</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities would affect the project.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed project would place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>There are currently no other studies, plans or projects on these tracts.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This project would not impact any other plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this</p>

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alternative there would be no impacts to the plans or studies.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE

POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?

The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks.

Action Alternative: The installation of the line would not add to safety risks in the area.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to human health or safety.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?

The area of impact is managed for typical agricultural activities such as grazing.

Action Alternative: Any short-term disturbance to vegetation would be too small to have a measurable economic impact on the agricultural activities on these tracts.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to agricultural activities.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.

Action Alternative: The project would not create nor impact any jobs in the area.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?

Action Alternative: The project would have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.

	<p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would increase vehicle traffic in the area during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust lands. They are managed for typical agricultural activities.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there would be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>These tracts are directly adjacent to, and accessible from a County Road, and this project would have no impact on that access.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the recreational values.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would enhance telecommunications capabilities for the surrounding area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	<p>Action Alternative: The project would not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	<p>This project is intended to provide greater telecommunication capabilities in the surrounding area/communities. This is a rural area with limited capabilities currently.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the line across School Trust lands would have relatively little economic impact to the School Trust Land but would provide surrounding communities with increased telecommunications capabilities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts to the social and economic circumstances under this alternative.</p>

EA Checklist Prepared By: s/Luke Gunderson Date: 03/13/22
 Luke Gunderson Land Use Specialist

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Action Alternative
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	No significant impacts anticipated.

27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:	
<input type="checkbox"/> EIS	<input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By: Matthew Poole Glasgow Unit Manager
Name Title

s/Matthew Poole\s Date: April 6, 2023
Signature